

Letters to the Editor

Our Own Curtain

The story in your Feb. 28 issue about the "surprise" caused by the new Red Chinese automobile displayed at the Leipzig Fair is another indication of the penalties we pay for not maintaining any lines of communication with Red China. Some day, no doubt, we shall wake up, suddenly aware of our abysmal ignorance about that nation, just as we were jolted by learning the truth about Russian advances while the Iron Curtain was impenetrable.

We learned about Russia almost overnight—about Russia's advances in science, education, in the virtual elimination of illiteracy, and in economic growth and standards of living. Much of this ignorance was our own fault; the Iron Curtain was held up by both sides.

I found out last summer, when I drove by automobile for a month in Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia and East Germany that there are many things about these Communist states which we Americans ought to know. For example, there is much more friendliness toward the West and Americans than we had thought possible.

At no time in the month and in the 2500 miles of driving did we find any anti-American feeling. We were made to feel welcome; we had no visa or frontier problems. We saw higher living standards than we had expected. There was more freedom and fewer restrictions than we had been led to expect.

I recommend strongly that more Americans drive by car into Bulgaria, Poland and Czechoslovakia so that we may know more about those Communist nations and so they may know from personal experience with many Americans that the stereotypes about us Americans are not true.

Most of all, we ought to develop some way by which a considerable number of Americans may go to China to see firsthand what is happening in that nation. Until this happens we shall go on being surprised by such developments as the new Chinese auto being shown at Leipzig.

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